

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 805

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L HERMOSILLO 0317

E.O. 11652; GDS

TAGS : PINS, PORS, MX

SUBJECT ; LAND SEIZURES LEAD TO BLOODY CLASH IN
SOUTHERN SONORA

1. SHORTLY AFTER SUNRISE OCTOBER 23 SIX MEN DIED AND 16 WERE WOUNDED (SOME CRITICAL) DURING A TEN MINUTE GUNFIGHT ON A FARM IN YAQUI RIVER VALLEY BETWEEN GUAYMAS AND CIUDAD OBREGON SOUTH-EAST OF HERMOSILLO, SONORA, MEXICO. CLASH TOOK PLACE WHEN SONORA STATE JUDICIAL POLICE AND GUAYMAS POLICE, BACKED BY 60 MEN FROM 18TH CAVALRY REGIMENT OF MEXICAN ARMY, ORDERED THREE HUNDRED SQUATTERS TO VACATE PRIVATE LANDS THEY HAD BEEN OCCUPYING SINCE EARLY MONDAY OCTOBER 20, PURSUANT TO COURT ORDER ISSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH MEXICAN LAW AND PROVISIONS OF CONSTITUTION.

2. LAND SEIZURE ALLEGEDLY DECIDED BY LEADERS OF FARM WORKERS TO DRAMATIZE THEIR IMPATIENCE WITH SLOWNESS OF AGRICULTURAL REFORM SECRETARIAT (SRA) IN PROCESSING LAND REFORM MEASURES INVOLVING SO-CALLED "LATIFUNDISTAS" IN SOUTHERN SONORA AND NEIGHBORING STATE OF SINALOA. COURT ORDERS OBTAINED BY INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNERS AND THEIR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, WHILE FARM WORKER LEADERS PROCEEDED FILE - "AMPAROS" OR REQUESTS FOR RESTRAINING ORDERS AGAINST THE COURT ORDERS.

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3. SITE OF CLASH, FARM KNOWN AS "EL CHAPARRAL" OWNED BY

ERIC MARTIN DENGEL, WAS FIELD BEING PREPARED FOR SOWING WHEN INVADERS DROVE FARM WORKERS THERE AWAY, SOME SAY AT POINT OF GUNS. ORIGINAL GROUP SEIZING THIS LAND WAS LED BY PROFESSOR HEBERTO GARCIA, REPORTEDLY HOLDING EXTREMIST VIEWS AND BY JUAN DE DIOS TERAN, A LEADER OF GENERAL UNION OF MEXICAN PEASANTS AND WORKERS WHO AMONG DEAD. THEY WERE JOINED ON EVE OF THE EVENT, BY 39 STUDENTS FROM AN AGRICULTURAL VOCATIONAL SCHOOL "EL QUINTO" IN YAQUI VALLEY WHO REPUTEDLY HIGHLY POLITICIZED BY LEFTIST EXTREMIST TEACHERS. ARSENAL CONSISTING 17 RIFLES, 12 PISTOLS, 60-80 MACHETES, MOLOTOV COCKTAILS REPORTED FOUND ON FIELD AFTER BATTLE; SQUATTERS ACCUSED OF OPENING FIRE. TEAR GAS USED TO END FIGHT.

4. ISOLATED "INVASIONS" OF PRIVATE PROPERTY BY FARM WORKERS HAVE BEEN TAKING PLACE IN SOUTHERN SONORA AND ADJOINING SIN-ALOA AT IRREGULAR INTERVALS SINCE END OF HARVESTS LAST SUMMER.

FARM WORKERS ACTED SOMETIMES WITH AND SOMETIMES WITHOUT BLESSING OF THEIR ORGANIZATION LEADERS, AIM BEING APPARENTLY TO PRESSURE SRA OFFICIALS TO SPEED UP REVIEW OF THEIR CLAIMS TO THESE PRIVATE LANDS, AND TO DECIDE CLAIMS IN THEIR RPT THEIR FAVOR. DURING PAST TWO WEEKS DEBATE BETWEEN LAND OWNERS AND FARM WORKER ORGANIZATIONS HEATED UP, WITH LATTER THREATENING TO TAKE RPT TAKE MATTERS INTO OWN HANDS UNLESS THEIR CLAIMS WERE SATISFIED PROMPTLY. DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS PUBLICIZED BOTH IN STRAIGHT REPORTING AND IN PAID ANNOUNCEMENT IN SONORA PRESS. ACTIONS OF FARM WORKERS ENDORSED BY POLITICAL PERSONALITIES REPRESENTING THEIR SECTOR SUCH AS FEDERAL DEPUTY AND STATE CHIEF OF NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FARM WORKERS HECTOR LEYVA CASTRO.

5. BLOODY OUTCOME OF CONFLICT CAME ON SAME DAY THAT FARM OWNERS' ORGANIZATIONS WERE SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH SONORA GOVERNOR BIEBRICH WHO WAS BEING ASKED TO INSURE THAT CONSTITUTION AND LAWS WERE ENFORCED. BIEBRICH PROCEEDED TO

CIUDAD OBREGON, AND IS MEETING THERE WITH SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURAL REFORM AND OTHER FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL OFFICIALS. AREA WAS REPORTED QUIET YESTERDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING, AS DEAD WERE BEING BURIED, WOUNDED TREATED, AND THE APPROX-CONFIDENTIAL

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IMATELY FIFTY ARRESTED INCLUDING PROFESSOR GARCIA AND ROSA DELIA AMAYA, WIDELY KNOWN SONORA LAND REFORM ACTIVIST, WERE BEING INTERROGATED.

6. MILITARY REGION COMMANDER GENERAL BELMONTE TOLD ME TODAY (DURING BURNING OF FIVE TONS OF MARIJUANA AND OTHER SEIZED DRUGS) THAT SITUATION IN SOUTHERN SONORA THIS MORNING VERY TENSE, AND AUTHORITIES WERE TAKING EXTRAORDINARY PRECAUTIONS

TO PREVENT FURTHER VIOLENCE. OTHER OFFICIALS, INCLUDING HERMOSILLO FEDERAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY, WERE CRITICAL OF SHOW OF FORCE APPROACH TAKEN TO REMOVE SQUATTERS, SAYING THIS WAS OPEN INVITATION TO AGITATORS AND DEMAGOGUES SUCH AS HEBERTO GARCIA AND JUAN TERAN TO PROVOKE SHOOTING AND CREATE MARTYRS FOR THEIR CAUSE. FEELING SEEMS WIDESPREAD THAT PRINCIPAL LOSER FROM THIS INCIDENT, WHATEVER OUTCOME, IS YOUNG GOVERNOR BIEBRICH.

7. PRI PRESS IS BUSY PUTTING BLAME ON OUTSIDE AGITATORS WITH MARXIST, MAOIST AND PRO-CASTRO VIEWS HAVING PROMOTED INCIDENT TO DISTURB CALM AND PROGRESS IN SONORA.
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